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ABSTRACT

This paper sets forth the position of the Nebraska State Department of Education regarding career education in order to provide a basis for the development of additional materials and assistance which will facilitate the establishment of career education programs in Nebraska schools. Career education is viewed as a comprehensive, systematic, and cohesive plan of instruction that will provide each student the opportunity to plan and prepare for a meaningful and satisfying work role. In addition to defining career education, this paper offers a discussion of: (1) a rationale for career education, (2) basic concepts of career education, (3) components of a career education program, including curriculum design, teacher preparation, and community involvement, and (4) guidelines for implementing a career education program. (SB)

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Career Education: A Position Paper

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CAREER EDUCATION:

A POSITION PAPER

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FOREWORD

The current emphasis on career education represents an effort to revitalize and refocus instructional programs to provide an improved education for all persons. Through comprehensive career education, schools can better prepare each student for employment in his chosen occupational area.

A State Department of Education Task Force on Career Education, comprised of a representative cross-section of Department staff members, is serving as the vanguard within the Department for career education. The Task Force has analyzed and evaluated many facets of career education. The members concurred that, as a prerequisite to further action in the area of career education, a publication should be developed stating and explaining the position of the Department regarding career education. The statements contained in this paper represent that position. As career education is further evaluated and refined, the position will be revised to accommodate new discoveries and directions.

Although schools in Nebraska are already including many components of career education in the instructional programs, much work remains in the effort to attain comprehensive career education throughout all school systems. The Department of Education stands ready to provide leadership in this effort. Every staff member in the Department is concerned with career education and will have a contribution to make in its further development. It is planned that this paper will be followed by additional materials and assistance to facilitate career education endeavors.

CECIL E. STANLEY
Commissioner of Education

I. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

At the present time, educators and non-educators are giving considerable attention to a concept known as career education. State and local education agencies throughout the country are in the process of sorting the various definitions, components, and purposes of career education, weighing their desirability and determining revisions needed to bring about effective career education. The purpose of this paper is to set forth the position of the Nebraska State Department of Education regarding career education, and thereby to provide a basis for the development of additional materials and assistance which will facilitate the establishment of career education programs in Nebraska schools. It is deemed that comprehensive, coordinated career education will enhance educational opportunities for all Nebraska students.

II. WHAT IS CAREER EDUCATION

Career education is a comprehensive, systematic, and cohesive plan of instruction that will provide each student the opportunity to plan and prepare for a meaningful and satisfying role as a working member of society. A total program of career education should provide instruction for individuals at each stage in the lifelong process of career development.

"Career education" is not synonymous with "education," although all education will in some manner help each individual prepare for his future career. Neither is "career education" synonymous with "vocational education," although vocational education is an integral part of career education. Career education does not replace, but rather permeates the total educational program.

III. RATIONALE FOR CAREER EDUCATION

The concern of schools is to provide for the growth and development of all persons through an educational program that will prepare each individual for the many segments of his life. The educational program is concerned with the individual's responsibilities as a citizen, his participation in recreational activities, his enjoyment of creative endeavors, his social pursuits, his physical and mental health, and his occupational role. The series of occupations which make up a person's career comprise one of the major segments of his life. Therefore, career development is an important aspect of the individual's total development, from early childhood through the years devoted to formal education and continuously, perhaps increasingly, throughout adulthood. Because the individual's occupation

has a major influence upon his efforts to shape his own destiny, the educational system should make provision for every learner to acquire those skills and attitudes that will allow him to correlate his occupational goals with other personal goals. Career development is a lifelong process in which the school plays an essential role.

Career education should help achieve the Nebraska Goals for Education.

In February, 1970, the Nebraska State Board of Education adopted a policy stating that the goals for education in Nebraska should be described in a statement jointly derived by patrons and educators. Subsequently, a series of meetings was conducted at ten sites in Nebraska for the purpose of determining educational goals. The set of goal statements developed through these meetings was adopted by the State Board of Education on June 11, 1971. A number of the goal statements relate to career education. These are:

Excerpts from the Nebraska Goals for Education

Each student should:

- Respect the total range of vocations and recognize their requirements and rewards.
- Possess the skills necessary for learning in any situation, and prepare to learn continuously at his own direction.
- Develop his special intellectual and creative abilities.
- Recognize his own personal worth and dignity and that of every individual.
- Be involved in the decisions which help to create his educational experiences.

Each educator should:

- Develop and provide learning experiences which are meaningful to the world of today's students.
- Work to insure that every educational experience is learner centered and success oriented.
- Seek to create programs which benefit the entire community and make use of its resources.
- Involve both students and the community in planning for educational decision making.
- Initiate and maintain open communication with the entire community.

It is anticipated that goals for career education developed by local schools and communities will relate to the goal statements listed above. Therefore, the implementation of effective career education should facilitate the attainment of the Nebraska Goals for Education.

Career education should increase the relevance of education.

A common criticism of education involves the lack of relevance of classroom instruction to the pursuits of students upon completion of the formal educational program. Many students see little relation between day-to-day activities inside the classroom and day-to-day activities outside the classroom. Effective career education will lend relevancy to the educational program throughout elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and continuing education by helping students to better understand themselves, and to correlate this understanding with learning activities designed to prepare them for the portions of their life during which they will be gainfully employed.

Career education should help students prepare for a rapidly changing world.

The structure and content of the successful educational program has been, and will, with increasing rapidity, be influenced by technological, environmental, and sociological changes. The following paragraphs exemplify such changes:

(a) The traditional view of work is shifting. It appears that the ethic of previous years which emphasized pride in workmanship and accomplishment has decreased. The stability of traditional beliefs seems to be weakened, particularly by the mobility of the population.

(b) Children's exposure to various occupations is becoming increasingly narrow. Elementary school children traditionally learn something about the workers in their own community. However, this contact is limited, and generally does not provide a broad base of career orientation. In addition, many children have little knowledge of the occupations of their parents. Because work has become less and less a part of the child's world, it has become necessary for the educational system to present a balanced view of work and its relation to life.

(c) The factors involved in finding, maintaining, and advancing in a job are changing. The number of unskilled jobs available has declined. Continued specialization has increased the number of job entry points, but entry at any point requires appropriate attitudes and appropriate knowledge of oneself, of job-seeking skills, and often of specific occupational skills. Although individuals may choose a particular occupation at the beginning of their career life, it will be necessary for many of them to change occupations at a number of points. There will be a constant creation of new jobs, sometimes accompanied by the elimination of old ones.

Individuals will need to be flexible, willing to learn new techniques, and willing to relocate with changing technological and societal needs.

Career education should provide for increased learning options.

The educational system traditionally has tracked students into either a general curriculum, a college preparatory curriculum, or a vocational preparation curriculum. The gaps existing between these curriculums often prevent students from participating in an educational program that provides optimal preparation for their future career. A revision, or perhaps a re-emphasis, in the educational program should enable schools to provide increased educational opportunities for all students.

IV. BASIC CONCEPTS OF CAREER EDUCATION

Career education should be based upon the following concepts:

A. Career education helps persons identify, appreciate, and develop their own characteristics, abilities, and talents.

Career education should provide for self-exploration as well as career exploration. Each student should continuously evaluate his own personal traits and personal needs to gain an awareness and an understanding of himself. This will help him identify the career area or areas which allow him to utilize and build upon his own special abilities.

B. Career education places strong emphasis on the development of effective interpersonal relationships.

A career education program should recognize the importance of satisfactory interpersonal and intergroup relationships and should provide opportunities for students to learn to work cooperatively and to communicate effectively with other persons. Skill practice in human relations should promote the development of positive attitudes towards other persons and other societal roles. Such emphasis is needed to help students relate satisfactorily to co-workers, employers, and others with whom they come in contact in the course of their career life.

C. Career education fosters positive attitudes toward all meaningful kinds of work.

Through career education, students should gain an understanding of the interrelationship of occupations and the dependency of society upon all occupations. Career education should strive to eliminate prestige barriers between the occupations. An effective career education program will avoid ascribing a hierarchial value system to occupational groups and will promote a respect for and an appreciation of each person's work.

D. Career education provides for maximum development of individual potentialities.

To provide for maximum development of individual potential, it is essential that the curriculum and instructional program be designed to meet the needs of each student. An individualized, learner-centered program is of essence in bringing about high quality career education. The program must recognize that students mature at different rates, and should therefore offer students alternate sequences

of study from kindergarten through postsecondary schooling. The organizational structure should adjust to and capitalize upon the interests, abilities, aptitudes, and circumstances of each individual. At the upper levels, provision should be made for entry and re-entry into work or school.

E. Career education helps individuals learn to be adaptable.

Because an increasingly complex and transitional society will necessitate a high degree of individual flexibility, the educational program should prepare students to cope with change, to handle new situations, and to meet new challenges. Activities in career education should be based upon an expectation of future changes coupled with an understanding of the phenomenon of change.

F. Career education helps students develop the capacity to make and execute decisions.

The determination of an occupational choice is a developmental process comprised of a series of decisions made over a period of years. Generally, each step in this process should be related meaningfully to the ones preceding and following it. Career education should recognize that there are critical decision points in a person's life and that each person needs to be prepared and equipped to make a satisfactory decision at each of these points. Career decisions should be based upon continuous and realistic self-evaluation. One's perceptions must then be synthesized with accurate career information to arrive at a reasonable career decision. Career education should include instruction in planning and decision-making skills, simulated practice in utilizing those skills, and opportunity for actual use of those skills.

G. Career education places emphasis upon people.

Career education should center around the student, his needs, and his abilities. However, consideration must also be given to the needs of society. To correlate the student's needs with societal needs, the school must maintain communication with the immediate and the nation-wide community. New information should be continually assimilated into career education to maintain a viable program and to provide maximum career-learning opportunities for each student.

H. Career education is incorporated into all subject areas.

Because preparation for a career falls into many different areas of the curriculum, career education should be incorporated into all subject areas. It should not be organized as a separate subject

area to attach to or replace other areas of the curriculum. Elementary and secondary teachers should be encouraged to emphasize the career implications of the subject matter they teach. The citing of relationships between academic study and occupational requirements and the focusing of instruction toward those relationships should increase the relevancy of the curriculum and serve as a motivational force for students. Multidisciplinary instruction should make provision for cognitive, affective, and psychomotor career-related learning activities.

I. Career education is sequential, allowing for continuous progression from kindergarten through adulthood.

Career education activities should be provided in an organized, cohesive sequence from kindergarten through postsecondary education. Attitudinal development should be the base for the program and should be an important part of each succeeding level. Career awareness, career orientation, career exploration, and career preparation should then be incorporated into the curriculum at appropriate levels. It is not expected, or desirable, that all schools provide the same activities at the same grade levels. However, it is important that activities be conducted in an organized manner, with each step building upon prior learnings.

A balance of content in the instructional program should provide each student with general knowledge that gradually leads into a more specific career preparation area. The program should allow the student to enroll in a sufficient variety of elective courses so he may focus on an area in depth or acquire more general skills for a wider spectrum of occupational areas.

J. Career education allows students complete vertical and horizontal mobility in preparing for a career.

Students should be allowed to revise career preparation plans at any step in the career development process. This means that no student will be locked into a specific educational track. Although instruction at the higher levels of secondary schooling should allow a student to focus in on a specific career area, that focus should not close the possibility of preparation for other occupational areas.

K. Career education provides students the opportunity to learn about the wide variety of occupations available to them and the kinds of skills required for various occupational areas.

Career education embodies professional, technical, skilled, and unskilled occupations. Students need to acquire adequate and realistic knowledge about many different occupational fields. This should include an understanding of the career area and specific

occupations within the area, the skills and abilities needed for particular occupations, the responsibilities of persons in various occupations, the general working conditions, societal expectations, political environment, and the economic implications. Study areas in the instructional program, particularly at the secondary level, should be correlated with career areas. All students, both girls and boys, should be afforded the opportunity to examine and participate in any portions of the career education program offered by the school system.

L. Career education provides opportunity for students to gain competencies needed for job entry.

Career education, at the secondary level, the postsecondary level, or at both levels, should enable students to acquire the specific skills needed for job entry. The career preparation provided at the secondary level should accommodate those students planning to obtain employment immediately upon completion of the secondary program, those planning to attend a postsecondary technical or vocational school, and those planning to attend a college or university. The program should make provision for students wishing to acquire specific skill training while still enrolled in the secondary school, through some type of work experience program carried out in cooperation with community resources. The eventual goal of the preparation phase is the attainment of entry-level competency in the selected occupational area.

V. COMPONENTS OF A CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Effective career education includes three essential components. These are:

(a) Curriculum design
(b) Teacher preparation
(c) Community involvement

In the development and implementation of local career education programs, a variety of methods may be used to accommodate each program component. However, each must be carefully considered in relation to the other two. The following sections describe each of the above components.

Curriculum Design

The career education curriculum design provides the framework for incorporating career education into all subject areas. The curriculum design for comprehensive career education should include: (1) attitude development activities throughout the total program, and (2) a sequence of learning experiences that provide for career awareness, career orientation, career exploration, and career preparation. The school may facilitate the implementation of career education by organizing it around a number of related occupation groups or job cluster areas such as business and office, marketing and distribution, communication and media, construction, manufacturing, agri-business and natural resources, marine science, environment, public services, health, hospitality and recreation, personal services, fine arts and humanities, consumer and homemaking, and transportation. The local career education curriculum design may include an arrangement of similar occupational clusters or another suitable job classification scheme, but should capitalize upon career education efforts already underway in the school system.

Throughout the career education program, attention should be given to the job placement needs of students. The instructional program should help students acquire essential job-seeking and job-advancement skills. In addition, the school should make available to students information about opportunities for employment and for further education. The counseling staff should provide assistance, upon request, with placement in a job or advanced education. Such efforts should be coordinated with other job placement agencies to provide maximum employment opportunities for each student completing a specific step in his career development.

The career education curriculum should consider the needs of all students in the school system. Special attention should be given to the needs of disadvantaged and handicapped students and the implementation of program options commensurate with their abilities.

The sections below explain more fully each learning area in the career education curriculum:

Career Education Learning Area	Age Level
Attitude development	Kindergarten to Adult
Career awareness	Elementary to Adult
Career orientation	Upper elementary to Adult
Career exploration	Junior high to Adult
Career preparation*	Senior high to Adult

*(Career emphasis may serve as an alternative to career preparation at the senior high level)

(a) Attitude development

An organized series of attitude development activities should be an intrinsic part of the career education curriculum design. This portion of career education should include experiences which will help each student to (1) analyze his own needs, abilities and interests, (2) view himself as a worthwhile person, (3) enjoy the feeling of success, (4) understand the need for work, the interrelationship of occupations, and the importance of all legitimate occupations, (5) adapt to new situations, (6) acquire decision-making skills and accept personal responsibility for decisions, (7) attain adequate job-seeking and job-advancement skills, (8) develop and maintain a positive attitude toward himself, toward other persons, and toward his environment, and (9) live harmoniously with other persons.

Each school staff member has a responsibility in the attitude development phase of career education. The counseling staff should assume the leadership role in coordinating personal and career guidance with other attitude development activities. Through a cooperative approach, teachers and counselors can incorporate many attitude development experiences into the career education curriculum.

(b) Career awareness and career orientation

Career awareness and orientation begin at the elementary level. During this time, students should become aware of and acquire information about a wide range of occupations. The occupational preparation skills embodied in academic subjects should be emphasized. Activities might include field trips to stores, industries, offices, service centers, and other job sites in the community, presentations or discussions by community persons, special class projects, and individual research and study of various occupations. A school system might establish a resource center where students could search for information regarding career areas. The program should provide students with a general understanding of a variety of career areas.

(c) Career exploration

The career education continuum should move from career orientation into career exploration at the upper junior high or early senior high school level. Each student, at an appropriate time, should select for further study a limited number of career areas which fit his needs and interests. During the career exploration period, the student should elect courses that correlate with his tentative career choices. In addition, other activities, such as in-depth research in a career area of personal interest and actual short-term experience in various occupational fields, should be made available to each student. The exploration period is generally the pivot point at which the student moves into a narrower career preparation area.

(d) Career preparation

The career preparation phase should provide each student with minimum entry-level competencies in his chosen occupational field. Specific skill training needed for job entry may be made available at the secondary and/or the postsecondary level. Students planning to seek employment immediately after leaving the secondary school should be provided in-depth occupational preparation in a job-cluster area. The vocational program presently offered by schools should be an integral part of career preparation for students selecting those particular fields of endeavor. However, traditional vocational programs should be expanded to provide skill training throughout the range of occupational areas.

It is recognized that schools in small rural communities have a limited variety of community resources to call upon for assistance in the career education program. However, such schools do have an obligation to provide as much career education as possible. As an alternative, such schools may choose to design a program which provides career emphasis rather than career preparation at the senior high level. The career emphasis phase might include experiences such as (1) an organized series of sophisticated on-site job observations throughout the senior high school years, (2) cooperative planning with a nearby technical school to identify selected course offerings which could be extended to students from the surrounding area, (3) diversified cooperative programs, or (4) summer mini-courses or volunteer programs which would enable students to observe and study occupational fields in larger communities. Creative planning and the use of regional resources should enable schools to expand curricular offerings to provide for a wide variety of individual career plans.

The preparation phase should also provide for the needs of adults in the community who wish to pursue additional training for their present occupation or new training for a new occupation. Through

cooperative planning with area technical community colleges and other postsecondary training agencies or institutions, measures can be taken to fill the gaps in adult education opportunities so that any persons desiring may re-enter an educational program.

Teacher Preparation

To effectively implement career education, it is necessary that all teachers have an understanding of the program design. Each school system should involve teachers in planning for career education and should provide appropriate orientation for all teachers prior to implementation of the program. Orientation might be provided through special sessions in the summer prior to the beginning of the regular school term and/or special sessions periodically during the school year. Teachers should become familiar with the school's philosophical base for career education and should understand the scope and sequence of the proposed curriculum. Orientation sessions might also include demonstration of career education teaching strategies, familiarization with new materials, and visitations with community representatives assisting with the career education program. The teacher orientation and preparation sessions should emphasize creative teaching methods that will help each student develop his own potentialities.

It will be necessary for teacher education institutions in cooperation with community and technical colleges, local school systems, and community persons representing a variety of occupations to (a) further identify teaching competencies needed for complete implementation of each aspect of career education and (b) design or revise appropriate preservice and in-service teacher preparation programs.

Community Involvement

Community involvement is essential to the career education program. Community persons representing a full range of occupational interests should be included on a Career Education Advisory Committee. Joint planning with community representatives will facilitate the acquisition of sites for field trips and for cooperative job preparation programs; resource persons for the orientation of teachers, counselors, and administrators; resource speakers for the classroom; and other types of assistance. Parent involvement is also vital to career education. The school should ask parents to help plan for career education, should orient all parents to the career education concept, and should invite parents to participate in appropriate career education activities. Comprehensive planning by the school and community will allow the school to extend beyond its physical perimeters to enhance its career education program and better serve the needs of all students.

VI. GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CAREER EDUCATION

The following steps may serve as a guide to administrators planning to initiate career education:

1. Organize a Career Education Advisory Committee.
2. Promote an understanding, within the Advisory Committee, of career education.
3. Establish goals and objectives for a local career education program.
4. Build a basic model for a career education program.
5. Analyze the present curriculum to identify elements of career education currently underway.
6. Develop a career education curriculum plan which will expand or build upon desirable career education elements already included in the instructional program.
7. Identify any modifications needed in materials, equipment, facilities, or personnel.
8. Determine what components can be implemented immediately. Establish a time line for implementation of the entire program.
9. Order any materials and equipment needed.
10. Conduct in-service training for the entire school staff and community persons who will assist with the program.
11. Implement the program.
12. Build in an evaluation process.
13. Provide follow-up assistance for teachers.
14. Make any needed revisions.

VII. CONCLUSION

Career education should help the school prepare each student for the world of today and the world of tomorrow. Career education is not intended to prepare students for every aspect of their lives. It cannot cover every need of every student. However, it should specifically prepare the student for his role and responsibilities as a working member of society and generally help each person live a more meaningful life.

Career education is a continuous viable learning process, based upon broad general concepts, which combines the resources of the school and community to provide an enriched, improved instructional program. Career education experiences, blended into the instructional program from elementary through postsecondary and continuing adult education, can accommodate the career preparation needs of all persons.

Through careful planning, research, and experimentation, schools and communities can initiate or expand career education so that students may progress through an organized, comprehensive career education sequence. The State Department of Education recognizes the importance of career education and wishes to cooperate fully with persons, agencies, and institutions involved in the development, implementation, or improvement of career education.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Attitude development. The portion of career education which helps the student develop positive attitudes toward himself, toward other persons, toward work in general, and toward all legitimate occupations. Attitude development refers to a lifelong learning process.

Awareness. The phase of career education which helps the student become aware of many diversified occupations. Career awareness is generally provided at the elementary school level.

Career cluster (Job cluster). A group of occupations having closely related characteristics.

Entry level. The level at which a person obtains initial employment in a specific occupation.

Entry level competency. A combination of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for entry level employment in a particular occupation.

Exploration. The phase of career education that provides the student with the opportunity to explore a variety of occupations. Career exploration might include individual study or research, observation, and short-term simulated or actual on-the-job experience. Career exploration is generally initiated at the junior high school level.

Orientation. The phase of career education that helps the student gain general knowledge relative to a variety of occupational fields. Career orientation is generally provided at the upper elementary and/or junior high school level.

Preparation. The phase of career education which provides the student with specific competencies needed for employment in his chosen occupational area. Career preparation is generally provided at the secondary and/or postsecondary level.

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